

31 MAR 1986

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March 26, 1986

Mr. Tom Mangold
 Panorama
 British Broadcasting Corporation
 Lime Grove Studios
 London ENGLAND W12 7RJ

Dear Tom:

You wondered about my reactions to the program.
 Well, here they are.

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In sum, I thought the program (a) contained numerous factual errors, (b) was very misleading, and (c) was politically damaging. Other than that, it was pretty good.

I've enclosed a list of some of the errors and distortions which I found in the film. In response to this catalog you will no doubt reply that the errors were unintentional, unimportant, or beyond your control. Beyond the specific mistakes, however, is the fact that the film turned out to be exactly what I consistently told you I most feared: a disincentive to defection.

The central fact of the matter is that defection to the United States is a better idea now than ever before. With a presumably improved CIA program, and with Jamestown now on the scene, a prospective defector is reasonably assured of a good and productive life in this country. However, that is unlikely to be the conclusion of Soviet bloc personnel who view the film.

You filmed sufficient material to make a program which, although necessarily describing the sins of the past, would end on the upbeat and would serve as an inducement to future defectors. Instead we got a gloomy handwringing which dwelt almost exclusively on the past.

Where were the many contributions which Shevchenko, Sakharov, and others are making to our understanding of the other side?

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Where were the comfortable circumstances and bright futures? It was evidently decided in London that Sorokun, Nicholae, and Ushakov are likely to go down the tubes. Someone apparently has evidence on this which I have yet to see.

What happened to my statement that I had been assured by high level officers of the CIA that steps had already been taken to improve their handling of defectors?

Why were the defectors not asked what they would decide if they had to do it over again? Perhaps because all five would say that, notwithstanding their problems, they are glad they defected.

The Jamestown Foundation was portrayed in a favorable light, although I thought we came off as a little band of do-gooders who, while winning an occasional battle, are losing a war with the inept CIA. Because we are shown favorably, it may seem ungrateful of me to be critical of the film. However I repeatedly told you from the beginning that I did not want to be party to a simple exercise in CIA-bashing which would discourage future defectors. You and Lorraine repeatedly pooh-poohed my apprehensions. I think that the film confirms that my worrying was justified.

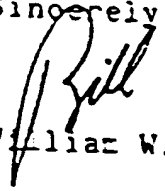
In his letter of October 4, 1985 David Dickenson said that the film would be "devoted entirely to the work of your foundation". This statement, upon which we relied, proved untrue in the event. The film mentions Jamestown's efforts on behalf of some of the defectors shown in the program. But the full scope and purpose of our activity are largely ignored. We are working with more than twenty defectors, helping most of them to produce books of some importance, and to reach policy makers and opinion holders. We are not the quasi-ineffectual social workers shown in the film.

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March 28, 1986
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We had hoped that our cooperation with the BBC would result in a program which would show prospective defectors that they will be adequately cared for if they decide to defect, which is in fact the case. Instead our cooperation helped produce a film which tells the prospective defector that he might be better off staying where he is. It's a document which readily lends itself to conversion into a KGB training film. I'm thankful that it's not on my conscience.

I'd like to believe that overriding superiors at the BBC are responsible for the shape which the program took, and that neither you nor Loraine ~~are~~ are to blame. I'd hate to think that you two deceived me. And I'd hate to think that the loss of future defectors was on your consciences.

Sincerely,


William W. Geimer

WWG/dw

Enclosure

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